



THE TOPEKA HOUSING AUTHORITY

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

How do I know if I am eligible?

Standards for eligibility are established by HUD guidelines and by THA's Admission and Continued Occupancy Plan (ACOP). These standards include income eligibility, criminal history, rental history and whether a person qualifies for THA's admission preference for working families.

Completed applications are only accepted on Mondays between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm . This establishes a family's place on the Public Housing Waiting List for the size of unit for which a family qualifies.

As units become available, names are pulled from the top of the list for the size of unit available. When names are pulled from the list, applicants are screened for eligibility. This includes verifying admission eligibility for a "working preference", household income, rental history, and a criminal background check of all adult members of the family to determine whether any family member has been arrested or convicted for drug-related or violent criminal activity.

How do I know if I am income eligible?

The following Chart shows the Public Housing Income Eligibility limits for 2010.

No. of Persons in Household	Annual Income Limits for Public Housing
1	\$34,450
2	\$39,400
3	\$44,300
4	\$49,200
5	\$53,150
6	\$57,100
7	\$61,050
8	\$64,950

What does it mean to claim eligibility for an "admission preference"?

The Topeka Housing Authority uses an admission preference for working families. This means rental assistance is first made available to families whose head of household, spouse or sole member is employed at any job for which wages are received on a regular basis. Applicants are given the benefit of the working family preference if the head of household or spouse, or sole member is age 62 or older, or is a person with a disability.

Must I work a minimum number of hours to qualify for the working preference?

No. Working is defined as any job for which you are receiving wages. You must, however, be working on a regular basis. Working a day or two occasionally would not qualify.

Who is eligible for the elderly and/or disabled status?

Elderly status is given to the Head or Household and/or spouse who is 62 years old or older. Disabled status is given to the Head of Household and/or spouse who is receiving SSI or SSDI for a disability or is certified by a doctor as disabled according to the federal definition of disabled.

How is the waiting list determined?

After eligibility for an admission preference is considered, applicants are ranked according to the date and time they applied. Head of Household and/or spouse who are working, elderly and disabled all carry the same weight in determining eligibility for an admission preference.

Does my eligibility for an admission preference change if my circumstances change?

Yes. If your family situation changes, your eligibility for an admission preference may also change. Fill out a "Change of Preference" form when this happens.

How can I find out what number I am on the waiting list?

Waiting list position information is available on Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. by calling 357-8842 ext. 100. Approximate waiting length times are also available at this time.

What should I do if I move?

Address Change forms are available at the THA Administrative Office.

Everyone on the Public Housing or Section 8 waiting lists must provide a change of address within 10 business days. If you are listed on both waiting lists you must provide a change of address form to each program.

All mail sent by the Topeka Housing Authority is stamped "Return Service Requested." This means the Post Office will not forward this mail, even if a forwarding request has been completed with the Post Office! If a person on the waiting list fails to notify THA by submitting an Address Change form, they could be dropped from that program's Waiting List.

What happens if I claim eligibility for an admission preference, but I am not really qualified?

All admission preference claims are verified before housing assistance is offered. Falsely claiming a preference will cause your application for assistance to be denied.

How many bedrooms will I be able to have?

According to THA guidelines, there should be no more than two persons per bedroom. Guidelines also state that a child of two years of age or younger can share a room with a parent and children of different sex can share a room until one of the children reaches age five.

How does THA conduct background checks?

THA uses a variety of resources to complete background checks. These includes using Topeka Police Department resources, the Shawnee County Court website, websites from other states and communities, as well as various commercial companies that have resources to identify criminal history of applicants. Applicants who fail to provide accurate information are automatically denied.

How does THA verify income?

THA contacts the employers identified on the application and requests that income be verified. THA also contacts other governmental agencies like SRS and Social Security to identify sources of income for adult family members. In addition THA verifies income and other eligibility issues through a federal computer network that cross-checks applicants and residents of public housing with all sources that report income to the US government. This network has permitted THA to identify applicants and residents who have submitted false information about their income, which constitutes fraud.

Discovery of unreported income results in automatic denial of assistance to applicants seeking housing assistance, and for persons already housed the results include repayment of rent to THA based on the amount of income received, and possible eviction. In some cases, recipients of housing assistance are prosecuted for criminal fraud.

What is the Difference between Public and Section 8 housing?

Public Housing refers to the 662 units of assisted housing that THA owns and manages on eight sites. Section 8 housing refers to a HUD program where income eligible families find their own housing and are assisted with their rental payments.

How do I apply for Public Housing & Section 8 Housing?

Applicants must apply for each program separately. It is possible for an applicant to be on the waiting list for both programs, but keep in mind that any change of address, family composition or eligibility for an admission preference must reported separately to each program.

Where am I on the Waiting List?

A person can learn where they are on the Public Housing and Section 8 Housing waiting lists in two ways. On Friday mornings, from 8:00 AM till 4:30 PM you can call THA's main number (785-357-8842 ext. 100) and check with the Customer Service Assistant. This person will look up your name and report your position on the list.

Who do I talk to about a problem?

There are a number of ways that a Public Housing resident or Section 8 participant can have a problem addressed.

If it is a criminal issue, please call the Topeka Police Department (368-9551). If someone on the Bar and Ban list is on THA property, you are urged to also call the Topeka Police Department and report it.

If it is a problem with something not working properly in your Public Housing unit, call the THA Work Order desk: 357-8842 , ext. 111. If no one answers, leave a detailed message of the problem and give permission for THA to come in and correct the problem if you are not at home when they come.

If you have an emergency problem with your unit after normal business hours and it cannot wait until the following business day (like water overflowing) call the main THA number (357-8842) and listen carefully, following the directions of how to reach the after-hours "on-call" desk.

If you are having a problem with another resident of Public Housing, you should speak with the person directly to try and resolve the conflict. If that does not work you can call Arnold Downing, SR.VP of Leasing and Tenant Services (357-8842, ext. 116). If you do not reach him in person, please leave a detailed message of the problem and how you can be reached.

If you have a problem with one of THA's staff, you can call the main THA number (357-8842) and ask to speak to that person's supervisor. If you don't reach the person directly, be sure and leave a detailed message of the problem and how you can be reached.

What is the Bar and Ban List? Who's on it?

The Bar and Ban List is a list of people that THA has identified as people that they do not want on its property. At the time the person is placed on the list, an effort is made to notify the person that they have been placed on the list through a letter at their last known address and by notifying Public Housing residents that THA knows has associated with the person in the past. If the person shows up on any THA property after being placed on the Bar and Ban List, this person is trespassing and is subject to arrest. If you see someone on THA property that is on the Bar and Ban list, you should call the Topeka Police Department (368-9551) and report it.

The Bar and Ban list is published in the THA Public Housing Newsletter and a link to the list appears at the bottom of the Public Housing web page.

How does THA track its Success and Improvement Efforts?

In 1999 THA was declared a "Troubled Agency" by HUD. At that time the City of Topeka brought in new management staff to assist in addressing the issues identified by HUD. In 2000 THA's operations were separated from the City of Topeka. Under this new management model THA has made steady progress in improving the operation of Topeka Housing Authority. In recent years THA has been designated a "High Performing Agency" by HUD, based on HUD inspections and resulting performance scores for Public Housing Authorities

How do I report suspected fraud?

When applicants or residents provide false information to qualify for Public Housing or Section 8 housing, or when participants in the program fail to report all sources of income, this is considered FRAUD. Unreported income, unreported criminal history, and incomplete rental history are the areas when false information is most often received.

HUD's Office of the Inspector General has been vigorously pursuing fraud in recent years. There are several ways that Fraud can be reported. You can contact the HUD Hotline (1-888-476-1229), or HUD's Office of Inspector General hotline (1-800-347-3735). You can also call any member of THA's Administration staff or any Public Housing or Section 8 staff (357-8842) or you can e-mail THA about fraud at fraud@tha.gov.